

State of Alabama

ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT

FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

Introduction

The State of Alabama recognizes that e-government has the potential to change the way that state government works over the next decade more than any other time in history. E-government has already generated many changes to existing laws and policies while creating new ones. The State of Alabama sees e-government as no longer just a good idea, but a necessity. Other states have shown that properly implemented e-government programs enhance their relationship with their citizens by making services more accessible to a broader market. All levels of government have begun to recognize the emergence of e-government as having a profound affect on how they do business.

Vision

The State of Alabama has established a vision of e-government as follows:

1. Improved Services to Citizens of the State
2. Efficiency and Economy of Government
3. Ease and Accessibility of Obtaining Government Information and Services
4. Improved Image
5. Increased Economic Development
6. Enhanced Educational Development

This vision recognizes the overall impact of e-government services to the State,

its citizens and its economy.

General Assumptions

Certain assumptions have been generally accepted within the State as part of its e-government initiative:

1. E-government must involve a multi-channel service delivery strategy in which the same service is available via the web, telephone or over the counter.
2. E-government must provide customer-oriented approaches to automated systems, business processes, management practices and organization structure.
3. E-government must provide both the opportunity and the necessity to transform government service delivery in realistic increments.
4. E-government planning and implementation must be based on prioritization and focus.
5. E-government must provide opportunities to realign service delivery across communities of governments and agencies, such as law enforcement or social services.

Goals

Recognizing these generally accepted assumptions, the State of Alabama e-government initiative will embrace the following goals:

1. Establishment of a *consistent approach* for citizens, businesses, employees and local governments to transact business with the State;
2. Development of a *shared strategic vision* among all agencies for the conduct of e-government, including a statewide technical architecture;
3. Design of a *standards-based* approach for implementing e-government

applications; and

4. Promoting the *cooperation and collaboration* among state agencies for developing statewide e-government policies.

Evolutionary Process

The evolution of government services through the Internet has historically followed a logical progression. The first phase basically published information about an agency and its services on a website. There was very little interaction other than e-mail contact information. The next phase recognized the value of some interactive process. This provided the ability for citizens to request specific information or documents, i.e. tax forms, license forms, etc., from the agency without having to go to a government facility. This added additional value in the form of convenience. The most predominate phase used within government is currently transactional. Transactional processes include a degree of commerce such that money transactions actually take place. Citizens are able to pay for taxes, licenses renewals and information. While this adds value to the citizen, it does not necessarily enhance the business processes of government. Most agencies merely handle these transactions as they would manual procedures. The real value will come in the next phase when government agencies begin to re-engineer their business processes to integrate these transactions into their IT systems. For example, a renewal of a fishing license done over the Internet would automatically update the agency's data base and print the new license for distribution. This eliminates any intervention by a government employee. Good enough, but the citizen still has to remember to renew their license when it comes due. The next phase is where the systems mediate between the systems and the citizens. Based on prior interactions of citizens, the system recognizes

that the license is due for renewal and automatically notifies the licensee that it is now time to renew their license. This is the beginning of the “push technology” phase of development. Citizens will be able to actually create profiles such that “designer services” can be developed based on “life experiences” directly associated with the citizen. Finally, systems can come to synchronize their systems with a profile. When the licensee is notified that their fishing license needs to be renewed, they may also be reminded of laws affecting hunting and fishing, water safety programs, hunting safety training, etc.

E-Government Framework

The development of any e-government system is the recognition that a formal framework must be developed that focuses on governance and standards. There must be some central authority to establish rules of governance and then to provide coordination for e-government efforts. Most states have established central project offices or e-government committees to provide oversight and strategic direction. The State of Alabama has established the E-government Technical Review Committee in the Information Services Division (ISD) of the Alabama Department of Finance.

Another critical function is the establishment of a standard e-government architecture. Without some architectural standards, agency systems will lack the ability to integrate operations and provide essential collaboration facilities. The State of Alabama intends to develop architectural standards for the following areas:

1. Portals
2. Security
3. Electronic Payments

4. Application Development
5. Web Development
6. Data Sharing

Portal

Most e-government programs focus on the establishment of a central view of government using what is generally termed a “portal.” A portal is defined as a single point of entry into a system comprised of many other interrelated systems. Using the ability to link from one website to another with the click of a mouse, e-government programs are structured to be accessible from a single government portal. The State of Alabama has developed such a portal called “**Alabama.gov**” (www.alabama.gov).

Governmental-to-Citizen Services

The State of Alabama intends to develop E-government services based on the need to deliver government services to their citizens (G2C), businesses (G2B), employees (G2E), and other governments (G2G).

E-government offers great opportunities for improving the public’s experience of government services – government to citizens (G2C). Existing widespread but simple changes in technology that have improved public service (i.e., tax forms available to download and online renewal of professional licenses, etc.) demonstrate how integrated and advanced services will bring dramatic changes. The State of Alabama intends to implement “intention-based” portals designed more around citizen needs than existing government organizations. This design will include:

1. *Ease in locating services* – Government services will be organized into increasingly intuitive structures allowing a citizen to enter a single query

about a topic, which directs the citizen to relevant agencies without multiple telephone transfers, or visiting a series of physical locations.

2. *Convenience of continuous access* – Government services will be available at off-hours (possibly 24/7/365); when citizens can most conveniently access them.
3. *Improved citizen response* – As technology takes over routine administrative tasks, resources both financial and human will be focused on delivering improved citizen services and addressing special needs.
4. *Single contact-point* – Single “contact-point” locations will be established allowing for input of basic information, such as a change of address, just once for an entire government.

Many of these features are already available in the private electronic marketplace, and Alabama citizens will soon expect similar conveniences from their government. They are unlikely to be satisfied with a government that cannot provide them these basic features.

Government-to-Business Services

The relationship between government and business is multi-faceted – government to business (B2B). Businesses are suppliers to, partners of, customers of, and occasionally competitors with, government. In addition, businesses must comply with government regulations while they maintain these other roles. Government to business commerce holds perhaps the greatest promise for realizing new efficiencies and economies through e-government, especially in the procurement of products and services.

State and local governments are also embracing G2B transactions such as tax,

corporate and Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filings. The greatest advantage realized thus far in electronic transactions with government has been in financial transactions, such as electronic funds transfers and procurement marketplaces. Other benefits of G2B include improved accuracy, turnaround time, and better information to support decision-making. The State recognizes the need to build and maintain a secure “extranet” for improving government-to-business services.

Government-to-Employee Services

Governments can effectively use an Intranet to easily interact with employees concerning human resource information, retirement, news releases and other employee-related issues – government to employees (G2E). G2E is a highly effective way to provide e-learning, and to promote collaboration.

Government-to-Government Services

Governments also can communicate effectively with other governments through online services – government to government (G2G). Some of these efforts may require more direct access to databases and applications; other e-government initiatives can be as simple as bulk data transfers, EFT transactions and information access. The G2G services will require more direct links through state intranets and will take place between all government levels.

Objectives

The primary objectives of Alabama’s e-government program will be the following:

1. Design and development an e-government State Portal with a citizen-centric approach, that utilizes intuitive design, and different search options for

enabling citizens to find government services and information quickly and easily.

2. Design and develop "push technology" concepts that will allow citizens to develop personalized home pages and receive electronic notifications of services and transactions based on their needs and experiences.
3. Develop customizable applications for State agencies that provide electronically delivered services and information to the citizens, businesses, employees and local governments of Alabama.
4. Support and maintain e-government State Portal hardware, software, and telecommunications facilities, an appropriate level of network security on all devices and access points and support for the growth in the use of the Portal.
5. Market the e-government State Portal's availability in a variety of ways to increase utilization of the services it offers.

Summary

In summary, those states that have developed a strong vision of e-government as a critical part of their economic well-being have been the same states that develop best of breed e-government programs. Those states that fail to recognize the importance of an e-government strategy are missing an opportunity to improve the quality of life of their citizens. The State of Alabama recognizes the critical role of e-government in its economic well-being as well as the well-being of all its citizens. Foremost, the State of Alabama recognizes the need to create a "trust-based" environment that provides government services in a fair and equitable manner to all its citizens.